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ABSTRACT

This book is the fifth in a series of six pocket-sized books written for career changers and laid-off workers. Each book is written at a 7th- to 10th-grade reading level and contains examples, hands-on self-discovery exercises, and step-by-step advice for a successful job search. This book describes a job search strategy that makes "overqualified" an advantage. Chapter 1 focuses on who the players are--the law, the older worker, the job market, and the job seeker. Four ways to combat age bias are described: ignore it, confront it, litigate, or expect and avoid it. Chapter 2 provides a strategy that includes the following: preparing for the job search by preparing mentally, identifying weaknesses, updating the resume, enrolling in a computer class, and setting a job goal; using the hidden job market; and practicing for the interview. Chapter 3 covers what to do if turned down, including following up, handling rejection, and troubleshooting. Other contents include names and addresses of six national resource organizations, a bibliography of 10 helpful books for job seekers, an index, and space for notes. (YLB)

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Job Search over 40: Selling to Your Strengths

Pocket Job Series No. 5

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Job Search Over 40: Selling to Your Strengths

No 5

Take Charge of Your Future!

3

About the Author

Amy Lindgren is the founder and president of ProtoType Career Services, a 10-year-old firm specializing in laid-off workers and career-changers. ProtoType serves up to 2,000 people a year in workshops and individual sessions. Ms. Lindgren also trains other counselors in serving laid-off workers, and is the author of more than 300 published articles.

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INTRODUCTION

Does your age affect your job search? Without question. I have delivered my seminar, "Selling to Your Strengths: Job search for the older worker," to hundreds of job seekers who are 40 and older. When I ask that question, their heads nod in agreement. When I ask for proof, the room fills with stories of rejection and age discrimination.

Somehow, being "overqualified" is small reward for losing the job.

If you are over 40, read this book. You need the advice and strategies in these pages. Job search is different now, but you **can** prosper — if you prepare yourself.

Are you ready to succeed in today's job market? Turn the page and let's get started.

Chapter ONE

Who Are the Players?

THE LAW

Age Discrimination in Employment Act

Everyone knows that it is against the law to discriminate against workers based on age. Still, hundreds of thousands of workers believe it has happened to them. Many would have a good case in court; many more would not.

If you want to learn more about the law, read the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) at your local library. Or contact your local office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

In the meantime, here are a few facts.

It is unlawful for employers to:

- Ask your birthdate (until after you are employed)
- Ask your age
- Make hiring decisions based on your age
- Fire you or force you to retire based on age

To win an age discrimination suit you must belong to the protected class of workers, which is age 40 and older. You must also prove you were capable of the work and that the position was filled by a younger person.

Claims must be filed within two years of the incident. Success is rare. Fewer than 1% of claims filed become lawsuits, and fewer than 25% of the lawsuits make it to trial. And claims can take years to settle.

Pretty discouraging, isn't it? But it's good to know what you're dealing with — you'll be more open to non-litigation solutions if you know how tough it is to win a lawsuit.

Combatting age discrimination

Including litigation, there are four clear ways to handle age discrimination in the job search.

1. You can **ignore** it. When an interviewer says "If we hired you, you'd be the oldest worker on the crew," you can reply, "I'd like to tell you more about my work in the field.

The job I finished last year was very similar to your current project."

In other words, you act like you didn't notice their ageist remark. Use this strategy when the person interviewing you is a "gatekeeper" — someone who does the interviewing but not the decision-making. Your strategy is to get passed on to the next interview.

2. You can **confront** it. Suppose the interviewer says "I'd like to hire you, but frankly we were thinking of someone younger." You can reply, "Did you know it's against the law to make a hiring decision based on age?" Or you can say something less polite.

At this point, you will be struggling to save the interview. No one likes to be corrected, and the interviewer probably will not reward you for it. Still, if you're going to lose the job, you might as well keep your dignity.

3. As noted above, you can **litigate,** or file a lawsuit. This probably won't get you the

job, however. And if it does, will you be happy there?

4. Finally, you can **expect** age bias and work to **avoid** it. This is the best path to take because it gives the worker the most control. But it requires an understanding of the employer's needs, of the job market, and of the worker's own skills. Without that information, you can't create a strategy that sells to your strengths.

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THE OLDER WORKER

What's wrong with older workers?

Do you watch t.v.? Think back on shows you've seen. How are older people portrayed? Usually as slow, crabby, old-fashioned, sick ... does that sound like someone you want to work with?

The problem with stereotypes is that they permeate our whole culture. Everyone is affected by stereotypes, including employers. Here is a list of the "faults" employers believe older workers have, taken from a variety of surveys and studies.

- Unable or unwilling to use technology, such as computers
- Hard to train; stubborn or inflexible
- Know-it-alls who won't take direction
- Always sick; time off for doctor visits
- Expensive, both in wages and health benefits
- Low energy, tire easily, not physically fit
- Frumpy; dress in outdated styles
- Grumpy; bad for office morale
- Difficult to supervise, especially for younger managers

- Short-timers; going to retire soon
- Prone to injury
- Unmotivated — just "putting in their time"

Yuck. No wonder you're having trouble with your job search. If the employer believes even a couple of these stereotypes, the deck is stacked against you. Before you get angry, ask yourself: How many of these stereotypes have you believed? Twenty years ago, how many 50-year-olds would you have hired? And the toughest question of all: Are any of these stereotypes true of you?

To succeed in this job market, you need to be slow to anger, and willing to see yourself as the employer sees you. Don't waste time complaining about the situation. Educate yourself and learn how to beat the system.

What's special about older workers?

Just about every stereotype listed above is actually false. According to several studies, older workers:

- Learn new technology as quickly as younger workers (if they already understand the basics of the equipment)
- Are easier to train because they can rely on similar past experiences to learn
- Take fewer sick days than workers in their 20s
- Have fewer workplace injuries than younger workers
- Stay longer in each job than younger workers
- Have stronger problem-solving abilities
- Are more reliable and punctual
- Have better overall work habits

In addition, older workers are less likely to test positive for drug use, be involved in a car accident, or commit crimes in the workplace.

So why aren't employers racing to hire older workers? Because they don't know the facts. **And the older job seeker doesn't tell them.**

The older you are, the more likely you were brought up not to brag about yourself. It's also possible that you take punctuality and

loyalty for granted. Why would you brag about something so common? But today's employer doesn't find those qualities to be common. You need to tell them **all** your good points. To learn more about today's market, keep reading.

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THE JOB MARKET

What's different about job search these days?

Well for starters, everyone is younger than you! The secretaries, the department manager, even the head of personnel is likely to look like they just got out of college. This can be unsettling, especially if you used to hold a job at their level. It's like being interviewed by your son or daughter.

Of course, to them it's like interviewing one of their parents, so they may feel uncomfortable too.

Another change is the job search process itself. Many workers say that it feels more impersonal than it used to. And it takes so long to get an answer!

In fact, that's probably true. Lawsuits have made interviewers more cautious and process-oriented. They want to show that each applicant got the same chance for the job. There are more applicants for most jobs now, and more paperwork. On top of that, many companies have cut back, so the

person interviewing you may be doing the work of two people. No wonder they don't send you a rejection letter until weeks after the interview — if they ever do.

There may also be more interviews for each job, and more paperwork and testing required. And, to help with the paperwork, there is a trend toward electronic tools. Employers may request a "scannable" resume that can be fed into a computer and scanned for key words. Or they may have you complete an application or employment test, using a computer. Or they may request that resumes be faxed to them, rather than mailed.

Job-seekers have had to make changes in their strategy to deal with the trends. Perhaps the biggest change is in the follow-up to an interview or application.

It is no longer enough to mail your resume and wait for a reply. You must call or write an employer every week or two until they have made their hiring decision. If this is done briefly and politely, it is not "pestering"

them. It is showing interest. If you don't do it, they have no way of knowing you want the job.

Remember the old saying: Actions speak louder than words. Telling them isn't enough. The job search rule is:

YOU MUST *SHOW* THE EMPLOYER YOU WANT THE JOB

What's different about the workplace these days?

The key word in today's companies, large or small, is **flexibility**. Every employee must be able and willing to learn new tasks and use new equipment.

An increase in technology means everyone in the company may need to be computer literate. Everyone? Consider this: A hospital in Duluth, Minnesota uses a computer to tell the night janitor which rooms to clean. There is no night supervisor to relay that information, so the janitor checks the computer.

A national auto parts store uses a computer instead of a time clock. Workers "punch in" by logging on to the computer. A large metropolitan newspaper uses the computer to tell the paper carriers about address changes in their routes. Taxi drivers nationwide use a screen mounted on the dashboard to learn about pickup orders and to communicate with the dispatcher.

Yes, everyone. Technological illiteracy is the number one fear employers have about older job seekers. Don't fall into this trap. **Get comfortable with a computer and let the employer know you can be trained.**

Another change in the workplace is in the staffing. Many companies are relying on temporary or contract workers for more than just overload help. And permanent employees are changing jobs more quickly. One study showed an average stay at a company to be just two years! You can expect your team of co-workers to change very quickly. Again, flexibility will be needed on your part.

The employees' lack of loyalty is duplicated in the employer. You may find less emphasis on company training or retreats, and less interest in "developing" employees. This can work in your favor. As an older worker, you're already "developed," at another company's expense. **Let the new employer know how broadly trained you are and how much you can bring to their workplace.**

Less loyalty from the employer also means they aren't going to take care of you. Not that they ever did — have you been laid off lately? But today, more than ever, you have to manage your career both inside and outside the company. That means learning about new products on your own, subscribing to an industry magazine, joining an outside group of people in your line of work, and keeping up your contacts. Give your employer your best, but don't assume they're paying attention.

What catches the employer's eye these days is the bottom line. More than ever, bosses are making decisions based on

short-term financial gain, instead of long-term company health. If you're used to a long-term company strategy, this change will annoy you. Don't fight it. Get used to it. If you are in a position of power, you may be able to change things in the company. Otherwise, you'll gain a reputation for being outdated, not a team player, not changing with the times. As an older worker, you can't afford that!

In addition to these changes in the workplace, you'll also see a difference in your coworkers. Besides being younger than you, and possibly less loyal to the company, they will be more diverse. You are more likely to work with employees of all races and religions, with women and men, and with disabled employees.

These employees may also be busier in their personal lives. With both parents working, for example, child care and school activities may pull a worker off the job more often. Workers are more likely to have second jobs today, and to be less available for company activities or overtime.

Again, if your children are grown and you're able to devote more energy to your job, you should be sure the employer knows that. Your free time is a valuable asset to a potential employer.

What's different about work these days? As already noted, the workplace has become more technologically-oriented. But it has also changed shape. With flex-time, job sharing, and telecommuting, work may look very different than it used to.

The U.S. Department of Labor tells us that more jobs are created by small companies than by large companies now. And women-owned businesses now hire more people than all the Fortune 500 companies combined!

Fewer companies are focused on "career track" employees than in the past. Now they hire the expertise at the level they need it, instead of "growing their own." Bad news for your children; good news for you.

And the increase in layoffs has led to an increase in self-employed workers. Some are contractors who provide overload services to companies like the one that laid them off. Others start home-based businesses using the experience they gained in the workplace. Still others start over in brand new fields, following dreams or hobbies.

Again, flexibility is the key. **To succeed in this market, you must be willing to redefine your idea of a job.** If you look only for a secure, 40-hour job with steadily-rising wages in a large company, you will look for a long time.

Today your job search focus should include any combination of part-time jobs, temporary work, self-employment and project-based contracts. For full-time, permanent work, focus on the small companies. Remember:

LARGE COMPANIES FIRE
SMALL COMPANIES HIRE

YOU

Why do you want to work?

What kind of question is that? It's only the most important question of your job search. Most people would say they work for the money. How much? For what?

You need these answers to be successful in your job search. How can you find what you're looking for if you don't know what it is?

Before you define the wage you want, take a look at your life. If the kids are grown, or the mortgage is paid up, you may need less money than you used to. Of course, you need to save for retirement. But if that's your primary financial concern, you'd be smarter to negotiate for a better pension plan than a higher hourly wage.

Take a hard look at your budget and **decide a salary range you can live with, regardless of your old salary.** Employers believe older workers are too expensive to hire. If you're willing to compromise, let the employer know.

Another reason people work is for personal satisfaction. They like the challenge, the chance to prove themselves, and the friendship of co-workers. Did you know you can get these benefits from volunteer work? Take another look at your budget and your schedule. Can you afford to work only part-time and volunteer the rest of your time? Would you consider retiring early and volunteering full-time?

Remember the key word: flexibility. A number of studies show there aren't as many full-time jobs with benefits as there are workers who want them. Some of us are going to have to choose an alternative job situation. But this requires good planning and self-knowledge. Start by completing the self-assessment on the next page.

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Why do you want to work?

Rank these reasons using this scale:
1 = very important
2 = somewhat important
3 = not important to me

__ to obtain health insurance
__ to keep up with expenses
__ to allow spouse to retire
__ for education of children
__ for "extras" — travel, new car
__ to save for retirement
__ to be active and productive
__ to give more value to leisure time
__ to enhance skills and provide challenge
__ other _____
__ other _____

Now take a closer look at the reasons you marked 1. Can these be fulfilled any other way? For example, can children pay for their own education through loans or grants? Would you consider working at a university where employees' children get free tuition? If you marked health

insurance with a 1, consider that some part-time jobs offer health insurance, as do some volunteer situations.

Take the time to learn why you want to work. Your needs are different now than when you took the last job. Your goals will be too. You need to update your goals before you can update your strategy.

What can you offer an employer?

As we age, our abilities change. What we could do easily a few years ago is harder now. What was difficult then is easier now. Knowing your abilities is essential. If you don't know what you can do, how is the employer supposed to know?

The employer is hiring you with three things in mind: your current skills, your potential skills, and your personality. Education and degrees are less important — which might be good news for you. But years of experience are also less important — which is bad news for you.

Here's why. An employer requests a certain degree or years of experience as a way of determining current or potential skills. If you can demonstrate those skills, with or without the degree or experience, you'll get the offer. The only exception is when a license is required to meet regulatory or insurance requirements. If licensure is required for the work, you'll need to get it.

To help you think more about what you can offer an employer, turn the page.

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Your current skills

What do you do best? Supervise people? Write reports? Answer phones? Build houses?

Use these two pages to note some of your current skills. Add more pages if you need to.

I can:

Your potential skills

What do you think you can learn to do? Operate a computer? Drive a delivery van? Counsel sick people?

Use these two pages to note some of your potential skills. Use extra paper if you need to. *Note: You have hundreds of potential skills, so think first of the skills an employer in your field would want.*

I can learn to:

Your personality traits

What are you like? Friendly? Patient? Punctual? A quick learner?

Use these two pages to note some of your personality traits — especially the ones an employer in your field would need. Use extra paper if you need to.

I am:

Now that you know who the players are — the law, the job market, you and your fellow older workers — it's time to create a job search strategy. Turn the page to get started.

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TWO

What is your strategy?

PREPARING FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH

Preparing mentally

Remember your four choices when you see age discrimination? You can ignore it, confront it, litigate it, or expect and avoid it. That's what mental preparation means for the older worker — expecting age bias, because it's real — while making a plan to avoid it.

It takes tremendous discipline and will-power to start a job hunt knowing you may get hurt. But if you don't start you won't get a job. If you follow the tips on the next pages, you will decrease the age bias you face. But you won't eliminate it, so now's the time to start growing a thick skin.

Identify weaknesses — and get rid of them!

As an older worker, you have two types of weaknesses in the job market: those related to the job itself, and those related to age stereotypes. In other words, if the job

requires computer use and you can't use a computer, that's a job weakness. If the job is usually filled by a younger worker, your age may be a stereotype-related weakness.

First things first. Do you know what kind of job you want? If so, write it here.

Job Goal _____

(If you don't know your job goal, spend some time finding out. You'll shave months off your job search if you have a clear goal. For more information on setting job goals, see the book ***Goal Setting for Career Success*** in the Pocket Job Series.)

Now, what does the job require in terms of skills and personality? For example, a medical receptionist needs to answer phones, operate a computer, know some medical terms, and be friendly and kind to patients.

You try it. Use the next two pages to write down the things you know you'll need to succeed in your goal job.

Skills and **personality traits** needed to be a

_____ (your job goal)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Ok. Now think in terms of age stereotypes. Look over the list you made. Which skills and traits might an employer assume an older worker wouldn't have? Put a check √ next to those.

Now go over the list again. Which skills and traits are you missing? Put an asterisk * next to those.

Items marked with a * are your job-related weaknesses. Items marked with a √ are your age stereotype weaknesses. And items marked with a * and a √ are your priority items. Get rid of these weaknesses or you don't have a prayer!

Here's an example. Betty wants to be a manufacturer's representative — a sales person — for the hardware industry. She has owned a hardware store with her husband for 20 years, so she really knows the business.

After listing all the skills and personality traits she would need (Betty had to do a little research for this), she knows where her

job-related weaknesses are.

Betty's job-related weaknesses:

- can't operate a computer
- no outside sales experience

Betty knows an employer might discriminate because she's 55 years old, and she knows sales reps are usually younger than she is. She decided to consider every age stereotype an employer might use against her. Here's her list:

- not driven to succeed; not "hungry" enough
- grouchy and frumpy
- technologically outdated
- hard to supervise
- unreliable due to illness

Looking at the list, Betty realized that one of the items was true of her. She really was out of step when it came to computers. Since that was a job-related weakness as well, Betty decided to take classes right away.

Although the other stereotypes don't fit Betty, she knows an employer won't know that. So she decided to prove each stereotype false during her job search.

First, she got some new outfits and a new hairstyle that made her look more up-to-date. Then she started exercises to help her posture and energy. She was amazed at how energetic she felt from doing a few exercises each day. Finally, Betty decided to rewrite her resume and cover letters to talk about her excellent work habits, the fact that she never took sick days, and her desire to succeed in another part of the industry.

By the time Betty finished her "makeover," she had effectively defended against most of the age discrimination she could expect to face. And her increased self-confidence made the job search seem less daunting. Employers really liked what she had to say when she began to tell them about her strengths and experience.

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Update that resume!

Take a lesson from Betty and get your resume in top shape. Use a professional service if you have to, but get recommendations first. Expect to pay anywhere from $50 to $200 for a quality job. That's a bargain when you consider the positive impact a good resume has on your job search.

(For more information and samples, see ***Resumes Etc*** in the Pocket Job Series. You can use the worksheets in that book to reduce the expense of a professional service.)

Here are a few of the errors common in older workers' resumes:

- Too long. Stay with 1-2 pages.
- Unfocused. Tell them just the things that relate to your goal.
- No goal. Your resume is stronger if all the facts in it relate to your job goal — so you need a goal.

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- Not based on skills and accomplishments. Who cares about your job description? Tell about what you can do and achievements in your past work.
- Goes too far back. No need to describe jobs from 30 years ago.
- Gives personal data. Including health, marital status and birthdate is old-fashioned and unnecessary.
- No recent, relevant training. Get some training, and put it on your resume.

Enroll in a computer class

Any computer class. Start with the basics, but do start. When you have completed a one-day seminar, put it on your resume. Keep taking classes and keep putting them on the resume. You don't have to be a computer whiz; but you do need to show the employer you are willing to learn.

Remember: you're fighting the employer's number one stereotype about older workers. Don't be techno-dumb.

Set a job goal

This point is worth repeating because failure to set a goal is a common flaw in many older workers' job search strategy. Your work ethic may make you say, "I'll take anything," but the truth is, you won't. You might not take third shift, or minimum wage, or a rotating schedule, or hard physical labor or a 70-mile commute. So what will you take? That's what you need to figure out and tell others.

A targeted job search is the only way to get things done these days. You need to decide these things before you start looking for work. If you can, fill in these blanks:

Job title or industry_____

Income range $_____ to $_____

Distance from home_____

Preferred schedule_____

Other_____

Now mark the two most important points with a *. This is the heart of your job goal. The other points you can compromise on, but these two points are what you want.

Note: The more specific you are about your goal, the better your chances of getting the job you want. Try very hard to come up with a job title or industry, as that will narrow your search.

USING THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET

Why is a goal so important? Because your goal is one key to the hidden job market. The other key is contacts. You need both to find the jobs that aren't advertised. How many jobs is that? Would you believe 80-95% of the jobs open in your city right now are not in the newspaper? It's true, and it's usually the best jobs that aren't advertised.

So how do you find the unadvertised jobs? Your best bet is word of mouth, which is lucky, because that method is tailor-made for older workers.

Think about it. Who knows more people: you or a 20-year-old? Who knows more people of influence? Who has had friends longer? Whose friends are in positions to provide job leads and introductions to business owners and managers?

The answer to every question is: you. The older worker has a tremendous advantage in networking, or word of mouth, or

whatever you want to call it. Best of all, **you've been doing it all your life.** You've probably helped at least one person get a job; chances are, someone has helped you. This is the hidden job market. It is a time-honored method that works. Use it to the fullest.

To learn more about using the hidden job market, read ***Cracking the Hidden Job Market*** in the Pocket Job Series.

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PRACTICING FOR THE INTERVIEW

When was your last interview? If it was more than a few gray hairs ago, you need to brush up. Like everything else, interviews have changed.

The first thing you might notice is how young the interviewer looks. Your first challenge is to befriend and impress this person enough to get passed along to the second interview. That means you must step into the interviewer's shoes and understand his or her concerns.

Ask yourself: why might a young worker be reluctant to hire someone twice their age? Besides the obvious age stereotypes, there is also the issue of personal comfort. Here is what the interviewer might be thinking:

"I won't be able to supervise this person. They won't take orders from me."

"They're going to be after my job. They're already overqualified."

"I don't think they're going to respect my position and give me support. They'll make me look bad because they know so much."

"I don't have anything to say to this person. There goes the softball team."

The key here is comfort and respect. Your job is to put the interviewer at ease while also showing respect for their authority. To do that, check for these common interview pitfalls.

Body language. Don't sit back with your arms folded. That's too know-it-all/aloof. But don't crowd the interviewer either. That's bossy/in-your-face.

Idioms. Stay away from "in-my-day" cliches. Do not emphasize the gap between you and the interviewer.

Work stories. You need to relay your ability, but you don't have to tell the interviewer everything you've ever done. Keep your stories short and relevant to the job at hand.

Unfriendliness. Look in the mirror. What's your natural expression? Make it a smile, at least for the interview. Put the interviewer at ease by relating a short, personal story — perhaps about a class you took recently, or a hobby. Pick something that sounds active or interesting, like a sports interest or a volunteer job. You are trying to find common ground so you don't seem so alien or intimidating.

Family. There's no reason to mention your grandchildren in an interview, so don't. You'd be surprised how many people break this rule.

So what should you say and do? The rule is simple: pick 3-5 facts about yourself that you want the interviewer to know. Then make sure he or she knows them. This is harder than it sounds.

Most people know how to answer questions at an interview, but few seem able to brag a little. Many older workers find it difficult to "toot their own horn." But if you don't, who will?

Consider this sample from an interview:

Interviewer: "I see you've supervised a crew of 30 union workers. That must have been tough."

Older Worker #1: "No, it wasn't too bad. You just do what you have to do."

Yuck. Put yourself in the interviewer's shoes. Now what do you say? The applicant has squashed the conversation by being the strong, silent type. Worse yet, the applicant didn't give the interviewer any new information. This next one is better.

Older Worker #2: "You know, it *was* tough sometimes. I was only 32 when I started and some of the workers were a lot older than me. I learned how to work with people from a lot of backgrounds and to keep control without losing their respect. I know your crew is union and I feel pretty comfortable about working with them. In fact, I'd like to take a tour today if you have time."

Pushy? Heck yes. But also a lot more interesting. The first job seeker missed an opportunity to relate to the interviewer and to connect past experience with the job at hand. The second applicant made it clear he/she wants to be part of the team.

Here are a few of the tough questions older workers face in the interview, and sample answers.

Q: We're looking for someone who wants to grow with the company. Can you tell me what you plan to be doing in 10 years?

A: To be honest, my plan is to work 7 years and then retire. That's a benefit for you to know, because I will be loyal and focused for all seven years. I know most people change jobs now every 3 to 5 years and they spend a lot of time on the clock looking for new jobs. I won't do that. I will stay seven years and you will have my full attention every day, every year.

Q: Frankly, you're overqualified. I'm afraid you'd be bored on this job.

A: I'm flattered. Actually, I'm not so much overqualified as I am well-qualified. I researched this job and company before I applied, so I know there's plenty here to keep my interest. Your new computer system, for instance. I'm really looking forward to customizing a database to help your direct marketing efforts.

Q: I know your last job paid quite a bit more. We can't possibly pay that much. Why would you stay with us?

A: I have an advantage over someone who has kids at home or a mortgage to pay for. The income is important, but what I'm really looking for is a company with a product and philosophy I agree with. I really believe I have something to offer you. I know we'll be able to work out a salary that works for both of us.

Q: I can see that you're used to being in charge. How will you handle being supervised?

A: It's true I have been a supervisor, but then I was also a supervisee. I know how important teamwork is and I'm ready to contribute my skills in that role. I think it'll be great to have co-workers on the same level. I like working with people.

You get the idea. Every tough question needs an open, convincing answer. Ask yourself the questions you would have asked an older job applicant 20 years ago. If you can't answer the questions, practice or research until you can. Or pick another job. But don't blame the interviewer for asking what anybody in that chair would ask.

Interviewing is a very important part of the job search. To learn more, read ***Job Interviews: 10 steps to success*** in the Pocket Job Series.

Then schedule a session with a professional job counselor. Consider having a mock interview videotaped so you can learn more about your presentation. Ask your counselor to evaluate everything about

your performance including dress, posture, facial expressions, body language and your answers to the questions. This session could cost you $50 to $200.

You may also find free counseling through your church, your city, or a local job search support group.

Remember this job search rule:

JOB OFFERS COME ONLY FROM JOB INTERVIEWS

So it's worth your time to practice!

Chapter THREE

What if You're Turned Down?

FOLLOWING-UP

Well, shoot. You did everything you were supposed to and you still got a rejection letter. Now what?

First, before they have a chance to mail that rejection letter, be sure you follow-up on the interview. Send a thank-you letter right away. Then call in a few days to see if they have any questions, then call a week later to ask if you can schedule another meeting.

Pushy? You bet. Who do you think gets the job: the one who makes it clear they want it, or the one who slinks away without a sound?

Always assume that the other candidates are as qualified as you. That means the decision will be made on the basis of personality and the "squeaky wheel" theory.

Being a "squeaky wheel" is difficult for some older workers, who feel they are pestering the employer. In fact, a number of surveys have shown that employers are frustrated by not knowing which candidate really wants the job. Don't make the employer wonder. Make your wishes known.

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HANDLING REJECTION

So, what if you do everything right, even in your follow-up, and you still get turned down? If you'd still like the job, keep in touch with the employer. Remember, a "no" doesn't always mean "no." Sometimes it means "We're not sure about you," or even, "We've decided not to hire anyone right now." Ask the employer what they wanted that you didn't have.

And if you still want the job after that, put the employer on your contact list. Call in about 3 months and again in 6 months and again in a year. Why? Because these are the intervals when new employees typically quit or get fired. The employer may also discover they need a second person in the department. When you call, mention any new classes you've taken and tell them you're still interested in their company.

Handling rejection is the toughest part of the job search. Learn to hear "not now" when the employer says "no" and you'll bounce back much better.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Review your job search frequently and look for problem areas. Are you getting enough interviews? If not, check your resume and your networking. Are you getting interviews but no offers? Check your interview technique. Maybe you're getting offers but they're all wrong for you. Go back and adjust your original goal.

Here are some job search problem areas common to all ages. If you've been away from job search for a while, these will be worse for you.

Wrong goal — doesn't match your skills or the market

Wrong approach — asking the wrong people or companies

Poor technique — resume or interview isn't quite right

Not enough contacts or follow-up. A consistent, intensive effort is essential. For more

information, read ***Five Steps to Your Next Job*** in the Pocket Job Series.

Don't let things slide. If you're not getting results in a reasonable amount of time, you need to take action. Job search plans don't improve on their own. Consider seeking professional advice. One or two hours of a counselor's time may make all the difference.

Above all, don't give up! **You will get a job.** It's just a matter of time and technique.

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NATIONAL RESOURCES

American Association of Retired Persons;
National Older Workers Information System —
1909 K St NW, Washington DC 20049,
(202) 872-4700

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission —
1801 L St NW, Washington DC 20507,
(202) 663-4264

Forty-Plus (national office) —
1718 P St NW, Suite T-4, Washington DC 20036,
(202) 387-1582

Office of National Programs for
Older Workers, U.S. Dept of Labor —
200 Constitution Ave, Suite 4649,
Washington DC 21210, (202) 535-0521

Operation ABLE — 180 N Wabash Ave,
Suite 802, Chicago, IL 60601, (312) 782-3335

Senior Career Planning and Placement Service —
257 Park Ave S, New York, NY 10010,
(212) 529-6660

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Helpful books for job seekers

From the *Pocket Job Series*, Prototype Career Press:

Five Steps to Your Next Job
Resumes Etc.
Cracking the Hidden Job Market
Job Interviews: 10 steps to success
Financial Survival Between Jobs

Other helpful books

50+ Starting Over: Career strategies for success, Karen Kerkstra Harty, Newcastle Publishing

It's Never Too Late: 150 men and women who changed their careers, Robert K. Otterbourg, Barrons Educational Series

Job Hunting after 50: Strategies for success, Samuel N. Ray, John Wiley & Sons

New Work Opportunities for Older Americans, Robert S. Menchin, Prentice Hall

Transitions: Successful strategies from mid-career to retirement, Dr. Stephen Strasser and Dr. Jon Sena, Career Press

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